

A Continuum of Learning-Focused Interaction

CONSULT • from the Latin 'consultare', meaning to give or take counsel. This moves beyond simple advice giving. To offer counsel as a mentor is to provide the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of your thinking.

COLLABORATE • from the Latin 'collaborare', meaning to work together. As a mentor, this means creating a space for true, shared idea generation and reflection with attention to one's own impulse control, so the protégé has room and an invitation to fully participate as an equal.

COACH • from the French 'coche', the German 'kutsche', and the Hungarian, 'kocsi', after Kocs, a town in Hungary where fine carriages were built. A mentor as a coach is a vehicle for transporting a valued colleague from one place to another. It is the protégé's journey. The mentor/coach is a guide and support system.

Skilled mentors operate across a continuum of interaction to support learning for their colleagues. Within learning-focused conversations, they flex between consulting, collaborating and coaching stances to develop their protégés' capacities to reflect upon practice, generate ideas and increase professional self-awareness. The ultimate aims of these interactions are to support self-directed learning by protégés and enhance their capacities for engaging in productive collegial relationships.

Versatility across this continuum supports response patterns that are developmentally and contextually appropriate for meeting the learning needs of novices. At times it may be most appropriate to consult; that is, to offer counsel and advice about processes, protocols, choices and actions. The mentor as consultant draws upon her own repertoire, experiences and expertise to advocate and offer perspectives and options. Alternatively, it may be most productive to collaborate; that is, to participate as equals in planning, reflecting and problem-solving. In this stance, the mentor and protégé share the work of idea generation and analysis. At other times, coaching, or the nonjudgmental mediation of thinking and decision-making, is the most productive option for supporting learning and growth.

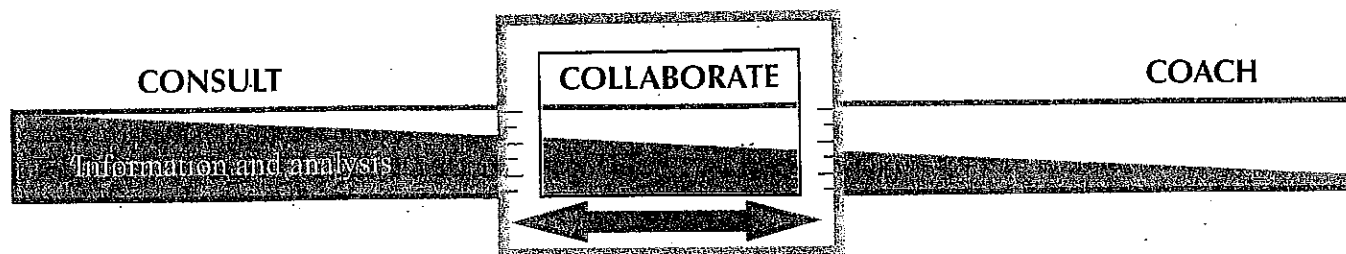
In each stance, trust and rapport, as well as commonly defined goals and clarity of outcomes, are critical to success. Skillful application of communication patterns across the continuum of learning-focused interaction encourages the protégé to learn from and with a mentor, and to generate his or her own learning.

One way to think about these outcomes is to imagine the colleague you would like to have teaching next door to you. With this in mind, create a list of the knowledge, skills and dispositions of this ideal neighbor. Then, note the various approaches you might take to help your neighbor develop these resources. You will most likely find yourself crafting lists of ways to physically and emotionally support your protégé, ways to intellectually challenge your protégé, and ways to model and support a growing vision as a professional teacher.

Three Stances: Consulting, Collaborating, Coaching

Two major attributes define the stance a mentor is taking in any learning-focused conversation. One factor is the way in which information emerges during the exchange. The other factor is the source of any gap analysis regarding such elements as planned goals and actual outcomes or teacher actions and student behaviors. Within a consulting stance, the mentor produces or supplies the information and identifies and offers expert analysis of any gaps. Within a collaborative stance, the mentor and protégé share idea development and gap analysis. Finally, within a coaching stance, the protégé produces the information and analyzes the

gaps as the mentor paraphrases and inquires to enlarge perspectives and clarify details.



To Consult

The intention of the consulting stance is to share vital information about policies and procedures, learning and learners, curriculum and content and standards and effective practices. The consulting mentor provides information in two important categories; information about how the district and school operates, and information about professional practice.

The first category includes the procedural expectations of the district and school, including legal and policy guidelines for matters like discipline and special education. In the consulting stance, the mentor might share information about policies for getting approval for and conducting fieldtrips, and how to manage bureaucratic tasks such as completing personnel forms and ordering materials.

The second category includes information about the craft of teaching including such things as; establishing classroom routines, developing a repertoire of instructional strategies and implementing curriculum guidelines. This information offers protégés opportunities for making informed choices and decisions as they implement these ideas and suggestions in their classrooms.

In addition to sharing technical information, the skilled mentor-as-consultant also shares principles of practice in the 'Why' of the actions and options. This intentional display of habits-of-mind models professional practice at its highest level and offers a vision of growth for the protégé. As protégés internalize principles of learning and teaching, these resources help them to develop approaches and solutions on their own.

Some Strategies to Use When Consulting

A useful template to guide mentoring practice is a pattern of sharing the 'What', 'Why' and 'How' of an idea or suggestion. For example, the mentor might say, "Here's what I pay attention to in situations like this; here's why that is important; and here are some ways to do it." The mentor then elaborates on the variables to be considered and the reasons for the final choice of action. When a mentor connects a specific

Some Strategies to Use When Consulting

- Think Aloud about your own 'What & Whys'
- Offer a Menu
- Produce an Idea Bank
- Conduct a Model (labeling the critical attributes)
- Review Tapes of Teaching
- Reference & Highlight Current Research

THINK ALOUD

strategy to the broader principles of best practice, the protégé learns to apply the principle as well as the individual idea. When a mentor shares the thinking process that leads to a solution, the protégé benefits from a deeper understanding of the process of problem-solving. Just as important, thinking aloud debunks the myth that experienced teachers have all the answers and no longer struggle with the complexity of decision-making.

OFFER A MENU

If our intention in mentoring is to increase a colleague's capacity to make decisions, we must offer opportunity for decision-making. However, there are times when a novice has little experience to draw upon. At these times, it is useful to offer a menu of ideas; we suggest at least three. In this way, the protégé is still making a choice, but has the support of the mentor's experience. To increase the learning challenge, once a choice has been made, ask the protégé to elaborate upon the decision. The capacity to articulate the criteria for decision-making is a hallmark of expert problem-solvers.

PRODUCE AN IDEA BANK

Similar to offering a menu, an Idea Bank also provides the support of the mentor's experience. However, while the menu is a spontaneous generation of suggestions, the Idea Bank is created proactively. In many cases, we can anticipate the needs of our protégés. For example, Idea Banks relating to establishing classroom routines will always be welcome early in the school year, or later on if management issues indicate the need for them. To keep it learning-focused, however, it is important to offer the Idea Bank when the protégé sees the need for it. Otherwise, it remains in the category of good advice that may or may not be appreciated or applied.

CONDUCT A MODEL

Demonstration is a powerful way to communicate effective practice. A model lesson conducted in the mentor or the protégé's classroom produces a clear example that is specific and tailored to the protégé's needs. The experience is more powerful when the mentor focuses the protégé's attention prior to the model. For example, ask a protégé to pay attention to the behavior management strategies, or the teacher's response choices, or whatever observable moves are relevant. Or, create a more formal observation strategy, such as a checklist or script tape for review and reflection after the lesson is completed.

REVIEW TAPES OF TEACHING

Videotape is a medium for slowing down, rewinding and repeating very complex series of actions. Viewing a tape of masterful teaching offers an opportunity to closely examine effective practices. The tape might be one of many manufactured for learning purposes, or created at the school site for sharing specific instructional practices that are aligned with school goals. While viewing a tape from a consultative stance, mentors label the critical attributes that make the practices effective, or even stop the tape to focus the protégé's attention or ask for a prediction or cause-effect relationship before going on.

Referring to professional books and journals, or citing information from recent professional development offerings models the life-long learning journey of all learning-focused practitioners. This practice also plants seeds for a protégé's professional studies and grounds any suggestions that might be offered in concrete research.

To Collaborate

In a collaborating stance, the mentor and protégé co-develop the information pool. This is often the case once a problem has been framed or clarified and solution approaches appear. A collaborative interaction involves shared analysis, problem-solving, decision-making and reflection. The reciprocal nature of collaboration supports mutual learning, mutual growth and mutual respect. Each party participates, alternately listening, paraphrasing and inquiring towards shared understandings and productive outcomes. Ideas develop through brainstorming, elaboration, and exploration of external resources. Prioritization, evaluation and, ultimately, implementation might be the function of each colleague, or the one most involved with or responsible for the event or plan.

This stance usually arises spontaneously as an outgrowth of the mentor taking either a consulting or coaching stance to help frame a problem or planning task; or once a central issue emerges, during a reflecting conversation. Careful pausing and paraphrasing by the mentor opens up the emotional and thinking space in which this stance flourishes. The use of inclusive pronouns, such as 'us', 'our' and 'we' or 'we're' also sends a subtle invitation to the protégé to join this stance. After paraphrasing, "so we have a list of seven items to think about . . .," the mentor can then shift to coaching or consulting based on her sense of which stance might be most appropriate.

Adopting a collaborative stance signals respect and the expectation of a collegial relationship. It is important to resist our own impulsivity to jump in and do the bulk of the analysis and thinking. Pausing to allow protégés time to think and prompting and encouraging idea production communicates our belief in their personal and professional capacities.

Some Strategies to Use When Collaborating

The most fundamental collaborative action is the mutual generation of information. Remaining nonjudgmental by applying the process of brainstorming keeps the exchange squarely in a collaborative stance. Among other things, we generate possible reasons or causes for a particular circumstance or event, a variety of ideas, potential solutions to a presenting problem or interventions that might be productive for an individual or group of students.

REFERENCE CURRENT RESEARCH

Some Strategies to Use When Collaborating

- Brainstorm
 - Reasons
 - Ideas
 - Solutions
 - Interventions
- Co-Plan
- Co-Teach
- Become Study Buddies
- Conduct Action Research
- Explore Case Studies

BRAINSTORM

ENGAGE IN CO-PLANNING
AND CO-TEACHING

Working together to create a lesson or a unit of study, and extending that activity by teaching together are natural expressions of a collaborative relationship. As learning-focused mentors, however, we must be sure to include protégés fully in the process, creating a true collaboration.

BECOME STUDY BUDDIES

A mentor and protégé might become Study Buddies, choosing to learn together about a new instructional methodology or reading current articles on classroom related research. This common focus provides a launching point for creating new ideas and trying new strategies. The learning aspect is deepened when we identify and share feedback about our mutual experimentation and set new goals for learning and sharing.

DESIGN AND CONDUCT
ACTION RESEARCH

Extending a Study Buddy relationship into a more formal action research project deepens the learning potential and encourages a spirit of conscious curiosity about our practice. In addition, instilling a norm of experimentation early in a novice's career is a powerful way to facilitate a professional vision as a life-long learner.

EXPLORE CASE STUDIES

Case studies provide a context for dialogue about practice. The open-ended nature of most cases offers a practice arena to consider the complexities of teaching. Exploring a case study from a collaborative stance can be an intriguing learning experience for both partners.

To Coach

A coach supports a colleague's thinking, problem-solving and goal clarification. The outcomes of the coaching stance are to increase the protégé's expertise in planning, reflecting on practice, and instructional decision-making. We draw from the work of Arthur Costa and Robert Garmston (2002) whose model, Cognitive Coaching, defines this stance. Cognitive Coaching addresses the underlying thinking that drives the observable behaviors of teaching. With a focus on cognitive and related emotional operations, skillful coaches guide colleagues in accessing internal resources and developing capacities for self-directed learning.

Some Strategies to Use When Coaching

- Maintain a Nonjudgmental Stance
- Inquire . . . about
 Successes
 Concerns
 Whatever your
 colleague brings
 up
- Reflect on Goals

In a coaching stance, the mentor supports the protégé's idea production by inquiring, paraphrasing, pausing and probing for details. These inquiries are not focused solely on the 'What's and How's' of planned actions or past events. They also focus on the 'Whys' of choices, possibilities and connections. The intention is to continually enlarge the frame to take in a bigger and bigger picture as the protégé's professional confidence increases. The ultimate aim of this stance is to develop the internal resources of self-coaching for the protégé. Over time, the patterns of a mentor's inquiry within templates for planning, problem-solving and reflecting transfer to the protégé's inner voice so he or she can be guided by this professional self-talk.

Some Strategies to Use When Coaching

Coaching is, by definition, a nonjudgmental interaction. The only judgments are those made by the protégé as he or she plans, reflects, problem-solves and makes appropriate choices.

Ask about successes, concerns or whatever your colleague wants or needs to discuss, using open-ended questions designed to produce cognitive complexity. Questions with a wide response range encourage thinking and invite choice. (See more on inquiry in Section Four, Learning-Focused Verbal Tools.)

Engage in conversations focusing on the protégé's learning interests and goals. Interactions that are goal-directed will be relevant and rigorous, balancing support and challenge by marking successes and articulating new arenas for learning. (See more on reflective conversations in Section Three, Maximizing Time and Attention.)

Keep in mind that many strategies, including several of those described above, can be adjusted to align with each stance on the continuum. For example, student work samples can be explored from each of the three stances, depending upon the mentor's assessment of need. From a consultative stance, the mentor can point out what she notices or recognizes in a set of student's work, given her expert perspective. The conversation can move to a more collaborative stance by brainstorming strategies that would be most likely to produce particular qualities in student work. Or, she can shift to a coaching stance by asking the protégé to find similar examples in other student's work, or determine some cause-effect relationships regarding student performance.

Flexibility in Stance

Expert mentors listen for and note the ways in which protégés are framing problems and concerns. In general, they enter the conversation in a soft coaching stance, somewhere between collaborating and coaching. Until you know the other person's perception of the problem, you usually do not know which approach to take or what problem-solving resources the protégé is bringing to the table. Often, clarifying the question, in and of itself, is a major breakthrough and leads to insights for the protégé.

In a problem-solving situation, problem framing is as important as solution generation. If you continually jump to advice giving, it can build dependency and can, over time, establish a one-up, one-down relationship. Problem finding and problem clarification are hallmarks of expert thinking. Growth oriented mentors must remember to keep an eye on the bigger picture while responding to the issues and emotions of the present moment.

MAINTAIN A
NONJUDGMENTAL STANCE

INQUIRE

REFLECT ON GOALS

In a reflecting conversation, the perceptions and perspectives of the protégé are initially much more important than anything you think might have happened. This is true whether you were present for the event or not. If you have observed a lesson, this is especially so. Your comments, feedback or suggestions for improvement all need a context in which to be heard. The context always initially belongs to the protégé. It is, after all, the protégé's world and worldview you are entering.

Once an issue has been named and framed, the mentor must then choose the most appropriate stance for approaching the situation. This choice depends upon the knowledge, skills and emotional resources that the protégé brings to the situation. The choice also depends on the knowledge, skills and emotional resources of the mentor. Novice mentors often leap to advice giving because they lack repertoire for operating within the coaching and collaborating stances. They also often lack repertoire within the consulting stance, skipping over the problem framing and the naming of principles of practice, moving directly to "Here's how I do it."

If the protégé appears stumped and lacks repertoire for contributing ideas, the mentor then switches stances. As a consultant, the mentor might propose some ways to think about a problem or concern, offer options for action and then flex to a coaching stance to help the protégé consider and reflect upon the options and appropriate steps to take when clear choices emerge. By attending carefully to the protégé's thinking and own idea generation, a mentor can calibrate his or her actions and decide whether to remain in a coaching stance or flex to collaborating or back to consulting.

At other points, the mentor might be in a coaching or collaborating stance and it becomes obvious that the protégé is unable to generate ideas or options. The aware mentor then flexes to a consulting stance to produce information and perspectives. With this refined third point established, he or she can then slide back to collaborating or coaching; whichever is now most appropriate. This pattern of flexing across the continuum continues as needed throughout the conversation.

TABLE 2.3 A CONTINUUM OF INTERACTION

I N T E R N T I O N S	CONSULTING	COLLABORATING	COACHING
	To share information, advice and technical resources about policies and procedures; learning, learners, curriculum and content; and effective practices. To establish standards for professional practice.	To co-develop information, ideas, and approaches to problems. To model a collegial relationship as a standard for professional practice.	To support the protégé's idea production, instructional decision-making, and ability to reflect on practice. To increase the ability of the protégé to self-coach and become a self-directed learner.
A C T I O N S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing resource materials and references to research. • Demonstrating processes and procedures informally and through model lessons. • Offering a menu of options to consider. • Providing introductions to building and district resource people as needed. • Offering expert commentary on student work samples. • Sharing principles of practice by elaborating the 'What', 'Why' and 'How' of proposed ways of thinking about issues and proposed solutions. • Framing presenting problems within wider contexts and providing expert ways to approach issues and concerns. • Illuminating principles of practice that guide choices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorming ideas and options. • Co-planning and co-teaching lessons. • Sharing and exchanging resource materials. • Planning experiments to try simultaneously in each of your classrooms, and comparing notes on results. • Jointly analyzing student work samples. • Joining the protégé to offer support and 'translate' when building and district resource people are there to provide technical assistance. • Jointly noting problem frames and generating alternative ways to think about issues and concerns. • Alternating paraphrasing and summarizing oneself with encouraging the protégé to paraphrase and summarize developing ideas and understandings. • Alternating offering ideas with encouraging the protégé to contribute ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a nonjudgmental stance with full attention to the emotional and mental processes of the protégé. • Inquiring, paraphrasing and probing for specificity to surface the protégé's perspectives, perceptions, issues and concerns. • Inquiring, paraphrasing and probing for specificity to support the protégé's planning, problem-solving and reflecting on practice. • Inquiring, paraphrasing and probing for specificity to support the protégé's analysis of student work samples. • Inquiring, paraphrasing and probing for specificity to increase the protégé's self-knowledge and awareness as a teacher and as a professional educator.

TABLE 2.3 (CONTINUED)

	CONSULTING	COLLABORATING	COACHING
C U E S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a credible voice. • Sitting up straighter or leaning back a bit from the table. • Using the pronoun 'I' as in, "Here's how I think about issues like that" • Using bookmarking phrases for emphasis such as: "it's important to . . .," "keep in mind that . . .," "pay attention to . . ." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a confident, approachable voice. • Sitting side-by-side, focused on the common problem. • Using the pronouns 'we' and 'us'. • Using phrases like, "Let's think about . . .," "Let's generate . . .," "How might we . . .?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using an approachable voice. • Attending fully and maintaining eye contact. • Using the pronoun 'you' as in, "So you're concerned about . . ." • When responding, using a pattern of pausing, paraphrasing and inquiring to open thinking; or probing for specificity to focus thinking. • Framing invitational questions to support thinking such as: "What might be some ways to . . .?", "What are some options that you are considering?" and "What are some of the connections you are making between . . .?"
C A U T I O N S	<p>If overused, the consulting stance can build dependency on the mentor for problem-solving. Advice without explanation of the underlying choice points and guiding principles usually does not develop a protégé abilities to transfer learning to new settings or to generate novel solutions on their own.</p>	<p>Mentors need to carefully monitor their own actions when they enter the collaborative stance. Their own enthusiasm and excitement for the topic or issues may override the intention to co-create ideas and possibilities. False collaboration then becomes disguised consultation.</p>	<p>The coaching stance assumes that the other party has resources for idea generation. If this is not the case, pursuing this stance can lead to frustration on the part of protégés. You cannot coach out of someone what is not in them.</p>